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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Identical letters dated 10 March 2016 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I am compelled to draw your attention to the very unstable situation in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, due to the ongoing breaches of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, by Israel, the occupying Power. The persistence and intensity of such illegal actions seem to leave little doubt that Israel has interpreted the international community's continued inaction as a signal that it can continue with its illegal occupation and crimes against the Palestinian people without consequence.

One of the occupying Power's latest egregious crimes occurred at the so-called "Gush Etzion Junction", the entrance to the illegal settlement of "Gush Etzion" in the occupied West Bank. On 4 March 2016, as Amani Husni Sabatin, age 34, was driving in her car, Israeli occupying forces shot and killed her. In what has become the standard response, the occupying Power stated that Amani was an "imminent threat" and therefore they riddled her car with bullets. As on many other occasions, the occupying forces who executed Amani alleged that "a knife was found" in her car.

Amani was a married mother of four children, with her eldest being 14 years of age. One is thus compelled to ask: did Amani actually leave home that day with the inexplicable intention of never seeing her children again and leaving them motherless, or is this horrific incident just another example of the occupying Power fabricating a story in order to literally get away with murder? As more than 192 Palestinians have been killed, including 43 children and 9 women, since October 2015, we believe it is overdue for the international community to question such Israeli allegations clearly aimed at "justifying" the trigger-happy execution-style killings of Palestinian civilians, including children, without any serious review or investigations into these allegations. While there have been some individual acts of violence by Palestinians against occupying forces or illegal settlers on occupied

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land, all allegations cannot be accepted as fact just because the occupying Power keeps repeating such allegations and branding an entire people as "attackers" or as "terrorists".

It is important to note that, even back in October 2015, when the occupying Power first unleashed its recent aggression against the Palestinian people, Amnesty International called on Israel to stop its "unlawful" killings, saying that the group's investigations had found "at least four cases where Palestinians were deliberately shot dead when they posed no imminent threat". In a press release on 27 October 2015, Amnesty International stated that "there is mounting evidence that, as tensions have risen dramatically, in some cases Israeli forces appear to have ripped up the rulebook and resorted to extreme and unlawful measures" and that "we are increasingly seeing Israeli forces recklessly flouting international standards by shooting to kill in situations where it is completely unjustified".

One of the examples that Amnesty International has documented is the killing on 26 October 2015 of Sa'ad Mohammed Youssef al-Atrash, age 19, in the Old City of Al-Khalil, who was killed as he attempted to retrieve an ID card at the request of an Israeli soldier. The occupying Power labelled the incident an "attempted stabbing", but an eyewitness watching the events unfold from her balcony said that Mr. Al-Atrash had posed no threat when he was shot. One of the Israeli soldiers had asked him for ID and, as he reached into his pocket to grab his card, another Israeli soldier behind him shot him in his right side, she told Amnesty. The eyewitness said that he was shot six or seven times and bled profusely as he lay on the ground for about 40 minutes afterwards, while occupying forces failed to provide medical treatment. She also reported seeing Israeli occupying forces bring a knife and place it in the dying man's hand. The eyewitness went on to state that "then they put him on a stretcher and pushed him towards an ambulance but didn't put him in. By this time he looked extremely yellow and I thought that he was dead at that point. He remained in front of the ambulance for another 20 minutes before he was put inside it and taken away".

Amnesty International also documented the killing of Fadi Alloun, age 19, on 4 October 2015, from Issawiyya in Occupied East Jerusalem, who was shot and killed by so-called Israeli occupying forces in another apparent extrajudicial execution. The occupying Power said that he "had a knife in his hand when he was shot". However, video of the incident shows him instead being chased by a group of Israeli extremists before occupying forces arrived at the scene and shot him from some metres away, without attempting to arrest him. Israeli extremists cheered as his lifeless body lay on the street.

These are just two examples of killings in cold blood by Israeli occupying forces. Amnesty International correctly stated that "unfortunately, Israel's investigation systems have long served to perpetuate impunity for unlawful killings of Palestinians by Israeli military and police forces". It went on to state that "wilful killings of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, over which all States can exercise universal jurisdiction". Since it is well established that, in over 90 per cent of cases, the occupying Power does not convict the perpetrators of such crimes, we call on the international community to act in accordance with international humanitarian law to hold Israel accountable for all such illegal actions against the Palestinian civilian

population under its occupation. As proven throughout history, accountability is surely a deterrent to continued perpetration of such crimes.

The incidents mentioned above are only a few of the countless violations being committed daily by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. Indisputably, Israel's belligerent military occupation is driven and sustained only by such illegal policies and practices, which affect every single Palestinian child, woman and man living under occupation, whether it be in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, or in the Gaza Strip, where 1.8 million Palestinians continue to live in the world's largest prison, suffering massive collective punishment tantamount to a war crime.

It is in this connection that we wish to highlight the recent remarks made by Robert Piper, United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. On 9 March 2016, at the launch of the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016, he stressed that 1.6 million Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are in need of food assistance, about 1 million of them in Gaza alone, a shocking figure in the context of this illegal half-century occupation and entirely man-made crisis. Among other regrettable facts, he also highlighted that around 90,000 people are still internally displaced from the 2014 war against Gaza and in need of major assistance. Mr. Piper also rightly clarified that "Israel's occupation is the main driver of humanitarian needs", and that "the fastest way to conclude the humanitarian operation in Palestine is to end the occupation". This fact should be heard loud and clear and must remain a top priority for the international community to finally achieve, for humanitarian assistance can never be a substitute for the fulfilment of inalienable rights and a viable and just solution to the question of Palestine as a whole.

Before concluding, I wish to draw attention to some of the most recent crimes perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in the period since our last letter to you:

4 March 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces shot dead Amani Husni Sabatin (age 34), a Palestinian mother of four children, the eldest of whom is a 14-year-old daughter, near the illegal "Gush Etzion" settlement, south of Bethlehem.

5 March 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces targeted with gunfire a group of Palestinian farmers as they attempted to enter their agricultural land in the Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood, south-east of Gaza City.
- Occupying forces detained two Palestinians, including a child, in the Bethlehem area, and summoned five others for interrogation.

6 March 2016:

- A Palestinian youth was shot and injured with a rubber-coated steel bullet by Israeli occupying forces in the town of Al-Khader, to the south of Bethlehem.
- Occupying forces detained seven Palestinians from across the West Bank and summoned eight others for interrogation.

7 March 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces detained 20 Palestinians, including four children, during predawn raids in the West Bank.
- Occupying forces demolished a Palestinian-owned animal barn near the town of Halhoul, north of Al-Khalil, under the pretext of "construction without a permit".
- Occupying forces shot and injured a Palestinian man east of Al-Bureij refugee camp in Gaza.

8 March 2016:

- Israeli settlers razed large tracts of Palestinian land near the village of Kisan, east of Bethlehem.
- Israeli occupying forces shot and killed a Palestinian woman, Fadwa Ahmad Abu Teir (age 51), in the Old City area in Occupied East Jerusalem.
- Occupying forces detained 19 Palestinians, including four children, and summoned two others from across the West Bank.
- Occupying forces destroyed the interior walls of the family house of Ibrahim Skafi, who was killed by Israeli occupying forces in November 2015 in Al-Khalil.
- Occupying forces kidnapped a Palestinian and seized a vehicle near Al-Khalil.
- Fouad Abu Rajab al-Tamimi (age 21) was shot and killed by Israeli occupying forces near Salah al-Din Street in Occupied East Jerusalem.

9 March 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces shot and killed Abdel Malak Abu Kharoub (age 19) and Mohammed Jamal al-Kalouti (age 21) outside the New Gate in Jerusalem and critically injured Imad Abu Ali (age 57), a resident of Jerusalem's Old City.
- Occupying forces shot and killed a Palestinian child, Sami Amer (age 16), near the village of Al-Zawiya in Salfit.
- Occupying forces detained 23 Palestinians in overnight and predawn raids across the West Bank.

10 March 2016:

- Israeli occupying forces detained 33 Palestinians across the West Bank, mostly in Qalqilya, Nablus and Al-Khalil.

The incidents cited above offer just a glimpse of the vast number of unjust, unlawful actions being perpetrated daily against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power. The brutality being suffered by our people at the hands of this illegal occupation is intensifying tensions and hatred and making peace ever more elusive. We call on the international community to heed not only the calls by the Palestinian side but also the calls by others, including the appeal made by Mr. Piper that "our first priority must be about protection. Palestinians living under occupation need protection." Failing this, the occupying Power will continue to believe that it can act above the law, persisting with its illegal policies and practices

and accelerating the downward spiral that this illegal, destructive occupation has put both peoples on, with grave consequences for the prospects for Palestinian-Israeli peace and coexistence and for regional stability. We thus again call on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to mobilize the necessary political will to act to uphold its responsibilities in accordance with international law and the numerous relevant United Nations resolutions and to fulfil its unkept promises to the Palestinian people to bring an end to Israel's occupation and realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to freedom and independence in their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This letter is in follow-up to our 577 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 4 March 2016 (A/ES-10/714-S/2016/212), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.